

26th November 2021

Response to Environment Report Inland Rail (EPBC 2020/8721) Tottenham to Albury Project, Victoria.

**Respondents: Wandong-Heathcote Junction Community Group Inc.
Wandong History Group Inc.
Wandong Public Hall Committee Inc.**

Scope of Response: Wandong-Heathcote Junction Demolition Project (erroneously named Wandong Enhancement Site)

It is the observed and evidence-based contention of the respondents that the Environment Report does not effectively address the issues raised with the ARTC at numerous meetings and correspondence over the past two years. In fact, the Report contains errors, demonstrates minimisation of issues and omission of issues. Specifically, these are:

1. The Scope of the Environment Report

The claim in the Social and Economic Base Assessment Report that this assessment was not required under the Minister's scoping directions is incorrect. The Scope specified for the Environment Report clearly states in section 7 " Social and Economic" that:

" The environment report must identify the social and economic impacts (both positive and negative) of the proposed project at local, regional, state and national levels. This may include (a) insights into social and economic impacts from public consultation..." , etc.

2. Site Minimisation

The Wandong project site is minimised in the Report. The site is referred to as the Wandong-Broadford Road site. In fact, the project site encompasses and impacts more than just the Wandong-Broadford Road. Wandong bridge replacement site consists of

- the demolition of the existing bridge
- damage to Rail Street
- removal of an unspecified number of 20 year-old Pin Oak trees
- damage to and possible demolition of Pickett Walk Reserve

- damage to and possible demolition of the Lion's Club Reserve
- removal of an unspecified number of 20 year-old Pin Oak trees forming an entrance avenue to our township along the Kilmore-Epping Road
- the elevation of Kilmore-Epping Road
- the elevation of Rail Street
- removal of station parking
- removal of station bus stop
- acquisition of resident houses and land parcels
- destruction of several sites of potential historical value
- destruction of site/s on the Heritage Inventory relating to Wandong's industrial history and early settlement
- destruction of the aesthetic visual amenity of Wandong-Heathcote Junction
- traffic disruption in Wandong-Heathcote Junction
- traffic bank up on Kilmore-Epping Road at Heathcote Junction crossing waiting for 2.5-3km freight trains to pass by and
- accidents and incidents on the Hume and diversion of traffic through Wandong-Heathcote Junction.

3. Population of Wandong-Heathcote Junction

The cited population of 348 residents who will be impacted by the project is incorrect. There are more than 400 children attending the Wandong Primary School on a daily basis with 49% coming from outside the township either by bus or car via the road network. The school is located in Rail Street on the east side of the rail track and is less than 500 metres from the bridge replacement site.

In addition the impacted community consists of Wandong and Heathcote Junction - two railway stations but one community utilising the one set of services and facilities. Our community of Wandong-Heathcote Junction has a population in excess of 3000 - the majority of whom use the current bridge and rail crossings to access medical services, retail services, secondary schools, employment, recreation and transport.

4. Heritage

The Heritage list in the report refers only to the house and garden at 780 Wandong Road. It omits the HVI listed property at 1a Rail Street (a property nominated for partial public acquisition) and other properties investigated by Heritage Victoria, including land of known historical use which is being acquired for the project. It also omits the recent Hovell and Hume Study currently under

investigation by Heritage Victoria which provides empirical evidence that Hovell and Hume's inaugural journey by Europeans into inland Victoria was from Dry Creek on the Wandong-Broadford Road and then down through what is now Kilmore-Epping Road in Wandong-Heathcote Junction. This journey is not only of local and state significance, it is of national significance.

5. Pickett Walk

The significance of Pickett Walk has been minimised. This Reserve was developed and maintained by community volunteers who started with an overgrown weed-infested piece of land bordering the railway station and manually worked with tools from home to create the beautiful and cherished walkway and traveller's rest that today is the proud entrance to the town we call home. It is named after the long-serving Station Master of Wandong who raised his family in the town. Later generations of the Pickett family still live in the town and the apparent destruction of this reserve dedicated to the long service of Station Master Pickett is of great concern. Pickett Walk is not, as described in the report, a community garden. It is not a vegetable patch or beds of petunias. It is part of the heart and neighbourhood character of Wandong-Heathcote Junction. It also represents twenty years of dedicated hard work by volunteers and the much-valued peaceful and pleasant surroundings of our township.

6. Inequity and Lack of Parity

There is obvious inequity and lack of parity between the reporting of project impact on the flora and fauna aspects of the environment and the impacts on the social environment. Whilst impacted individual trees and scattered trees, and specific bird and animal species are meticulously identified, located and numbered, no such due process is afforded to the people who will be impacted by dust, noise, vibration and visual pollution, and by loss of amenity, and disruption or permanent change to lifestyle. It has been argued that the Ministerial Scope of Requirements emphasised the natural environment to ensure the preservation of biodiversity. This may be so. However, the Ministerial Scope of Requirements **did specify the social and economic environmental impacts** and these have not been afforded due investigative and analytical process. This starkly evident omission needs to be rectified before any further project work is done.

Furthermore, the natural environment of Wandong-Heathcote Junction consists of valued non-native vegetation as well as our valued native flora and fauna. The

avenues of 20 year-old Pin Oak trees along Rail Street and Kilmore-Epping Road are highly valued by the community and provide shade and shelter to people and native birds alike. Their destruction would be highly concerning.

7. Community Liaison Officer Position

The actual purpose of the Community Liaison Officer position has not been articulated other than this person will monitor and assess how each community and its individuals are coping with the stresses of dust, noise, vibration, travel disruptions, difficulty in accessing medical and emergency services, night works, disruptions to getting to school, work and services etc. Once this Community Liaison Officer conducts these assessments and identifies the inevitable physical and mental health issues such as anxiety, frustration, anger, depression, insomnia, respiratory illness, asthma - what then? This position has clearly not been thought through.

8. Health and Well-being

Health and well-being issues have not been dealt with at all. All the report states is that people can minimise the impact of dust, noise, vibration etc. by purchasing noise-reducing headphones, double-glazing their windows or moving in with relatives during the high impact phases. The report further states that those people who are disadvantaged, e.g. the unemployed, the elderly and those who cannot leave the area to go to work or school will be the most impacted because, in all likelihood, they will not have the financial means to purchase headphones, double-glaze their windows or move out. The kindest word that describes this recommendation is '*ridiculous*'! However, if this is the mitigation strategy proposed by the ARTC, will it then fund all the costs required for its implementation?

Furthermore the report authors did not consider that people move into Wandong-Heathcote Junction for work and to access the primary school on a daily basis. So where do they suggest that over 400 children and staff of the primary school be relocated during high impact phases? Will the ARTC be providing noise-reducing headphones to all children and staff of the school? Will the ARTC double-glaze all of the school's windows? What is to be done to mitigate the inevitable increases in respiratory problems? There is nothing in the report of the number of asthma sufferers in the community and amongst the school population who will be dangerously impacted. **This is indicative of gross**

negligence in impact assessment and mitigation.

The report further asserts that the noise impact of double-stacked trains will be insignificant as there will be an increase of only two decibels. Currently the noise and vibration of trains are heard and felt up to three blocks away from the rail line. There is a single-stack freight train that regularly passes through Wandong-Heathcote Junction between 2.a.m. and 3.a.m. Residents report being woken up by the train and depending on the weight and nature of its cargo, the vibrations cause windows to rattle. The vibration impact of double-stacked trains and the noise increase of two decibels will indeed be significant!

9. Alternative Options

The scope for the environment report states:

"the report must include, to the extent practicable, any feasible alternatives that could avoid or reduce environmental impacts (such as alternative construction methods and siting) and justification why they were not feasible). (pg5).

Alternative options of accommodating the double-stacked freight trains suggested by community members have not been considered. These include bypassing Wandong by constructing an alternative track, constructing an underpass under the rail line for vehicular and pedestrian passage, or constructing the replacement bridge further north so as to leave Wandong intact and move the dust, noise and vibration pollution further away from the school, the Wandong Plaza and the bulk of residential properties thereby eliminating the majority of the damage as outlined in 2. The reasons for these suggestions not being considered are undoubtedly monetary. However, given the expenditure that has already occurred and is over-budget the extra money required is minimal to the overall cost. The ARTC preferred option of constructing a replacement bridge next to the existing bridge is the easiest and cheapest path of connection to the existing Hume Hwy infrastructure. However, prioritising cost minimisation and use of existing road/rail infrastructure over the health, well-being and safety of the people of Wandong-Heathcote Junction is ethically unjustifiable and is therefore totally unacceptable.

10. Environment Report Structure and Format

The structure and format of the Environment Report is not user-friendly. In fact, it is structured and formatted in a way which discourages perusal and scrutiny by local community organisations and individuals. The size of the Report with its

attachments and appendices is beyond the IT and printing capacity of most localised community groups and individuals. The format is categorically theme based where individual issues and themes are grouped across all site locations instead of all issues and themes being grouped in individual locations. This means that individual themes and issues specific to site locations like Wandong-Heathcote Junction are embedded within specific sections of the Report containing the sought after information not only for Wandong-Heathcote Junction but for all site locations across the state. This results in the need to wade through information irrelevant to a specific site and to print out whole pages in order to obtain a few sentences specific to the site of interest. If local community perusal, review and comment were genuinely sought by the ARTC then the Report would have been structured in chapters pertaining to each individual project site, and a more reasonable time for preparation and lodging of submissions would have been allowed. Clearly, genuine community perusal and evaluation is not wanted.

11. Consultation

The ARTC consultation process has been devoid of the provision of factual information concerning the project site and project impacts. Instead, it has been a process of glossy brochures, self-promoting newsletters and false reassurances through manipulative spin. Specifically, the ARTC has

- ignored and avoided questions relating to the project site and area
- refused to provide project site maps (two community members haggled with ARTC representatives for three hours before one was provided)
- provided different project area maps to different people in the community
- told community people that there would be no vibrations and no adverse environmental impacts
- did not mention the acquisition of houses and properties, the elevation of Kilmore-Epping Road, the removal of our 20 year old avenues of Pin Oak trees, and the destruction of Pickett Walk and Lion's Club Reserves and
- has not, to date, provided any preferred and/or potential plan (s) for Wandong-Heathcote Junction.

Basically, the community still does not know what is happening and, thus, is becoming increasingly frustrated, anxious and angry. There is no meaningful information and, thus, there is no consultation!

Therefore, this Environment Report fails to address the social/economic impacts

on our community and is incomplete.

The Wandong-Heathcote Junction community has also been excluded from consultations and negotiations between the ARTC and Mitchell Shire Council. In fact, the Mitchell Council has not consulted with the community of Wandong-Heathcote Junction about the Inland Rail Project at all. The respondent community organisations have made numerous requests to Council regarding the need for discussion and consultation. These include

- forwarding copies of our submissions regarding the Planning Scheme Amendment requested by the ARTC to the Mayor, CEO and Councillors for discussion and support (No action by Council)
- forwarding copies of extensive heritage investigative research pertaining to listed and potential heritage sites which will be impacted and destroyed by the bridge replacement works (No action from Council)
- forwarding requests for Council representatives to attend meetings between the respondent organisations and the ARTC (No action by Council)
- forwarding requests for copies of Council's submissions to the ARTC and information about decisions made by Council regarding the intended project works at Wandong. Only action by Council was to verbally inform community representatives that the discussions between Council and the ARTC were confidential. This assertion was raised with the ARTC who responded, in an e-mail, that all information provided to Council was public information and was not covered by any confidentiality agreements, and
- forwarding letters from respondent groups requesting Mitchell Shire Council's involvement and consultation (No action from Council)

Hence, the respondent organisations want it to be clearly known and understood that any discussion, information, submission and/or decision concerning Wandong-Heathcote Junction and the Inland Rail Project at Wandong-Heathcote Junction conveyed to the ARTC, DELWP and/or the Minister for Planning by Mitchell Shire Council has been formulated without any input from the community of Wandong-Heathcote Junction, without any consultation with the community of Wandong-Heathcote Junction, and without any knowledge by the community of Wandong-Heathcote Junction. Thus, Mitchell Shire Council's submissions and decisions regarding Wandong-Heathcote Junction are in no way

representative of the township's community and its views, concerns and issues pertaining to the ARTC Inland Rail site at Wandong.

A fitting conclusion to this response to the ARTC Environment Report has been provided by a life-long resident of Wandong who is also a Pickett family descendant who wrote:

"Despite extensive consultation with ARTC we are still no nearer to knowing what is planned for Wandong. We were told to wait for this report which we did yet we are still no clearer on what's happening. Why is ARTC being so cagey and cloaking the truth I suspect in words meant to divert and confuse. For example, we would not have been told about the acquisitions and the issues around the destruction of Pickett Walk had we not pushed for the information. ARTC clearly had no intention of providing the information freely and only did so under pressure. The recent report mentions things like the community garden, again words to divert and confuse, call it Pickett Walk, that's how it is known, why are you using such language, we can only assume its to ensure the community does not understand the impacts. Its time ARTC got on the truth wagon, be honest and up front with the community, we might not like what we hear but its better than swallowing tons of bull shit before we get to the truth.

On Mitchell shire council who say they are advocating for us, how can you when you have not once asked the community what we want. Clearly you are talking to ARTC with no community input, council keeps banging on about doing consultation with the community but on things like this major project that will greatly impact us - silence. So what is council hiding, they also need to get on the truth band wagon, stop treating this community like idiots and start practising what you preach, consult with us. Do MSC care about the possible impact on the historical sites, they know they are there, we have provided them with all the information, too late after its gone, we need proper representation by MSC and its time they started to do it".

**Karen Christensen OAM
Wandong November 2021**

.....

Response written and compiled by:

**Alicia Poperechny and
Wandong-Heathcote Junction
Community Group**

**Lynne Dore
Wandong History Group**

With contributions from and endorsements by:

**Karen Christensen OAM
President Wandong History Group**

**Allen Hall OAM
President Wandong Hall Committee
Secretary Wandong Heathcote
Junction Community Group**

**David Moran
President Wandong Heathcote Junction
Community Group**

**Sue Marstaeller OAM JP FRVAHJ
former Mayor/Councillor
Mitchell Shire Council**

Submission to the Independent Review of the delivery of the Inland Rail Program, 4th November 2022.

Respondents: Alicia Poperechny, Member Wandong-Heathcote

Junction Community Group

Karen Christensen OAM, President Wandong History Group

Member Wandong-Heathcote Junction Community Group.

Allen Hall OAM, Secretary Wandong-Heathcote Junction Community Group.

To Dr. Schott AO, and the Independent Review Panel,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the independent review process of the delivery of the Inland Rail Program. This program, which undeniably has the potential to provide significant economic and transport benefits nationally, impacts severely on our community and, despite nearly three years of requesting information and input into the location, design and operation of the Inland Rail project in our community, we have been ignored and excluded from any meaningful participation by the ARTC. Instead, we have experienced impact minimisation and denial, promotional spin, inaccurate data reporting, and deceitful consultation processes.

Wandong-Heathcote Junction

Wandong-Heathcote Junction is a community of just over 3000 people which straddles the rail line which provides V-Line passenger transport services to and from Melbourne, passenger transport between Sydney and Melbourne, and limited freight transport. The township adjoins the Mt. Disappointment State Forest to the east of the rail line and rural properties to the west. The majority of the population resides on the east side of the rail line. The primary school, pre-school, community hall, the local CFA and sporting facilities are located on the east side with the school, residential homes and the public hall located in Rail Street which runs adjacent to the rail line. The small local shopping plaza, a sole GP medical practice, a service station and the community memorial park

containing a skateboard facility and playground are located on the west side of the rail line. Access between the two sides is via a vehicular bridge and a pedestrian bridge in Wandong, and a level crossing at Heathcote Junction. The community became fire-locked and severely impacted in the Black Saturday fires, including the school, homes, properties and community facilities.

Responses to the review themes

In responding to the themes framing this review process it is our underlying contention that all the emerging and widely experienced problems and issues with the management and implementation of the Inland Rail Program are premised on the fact that the route of the inland rail had to utilise existing rail lines with new lines only to be constructed along gaps in rail line assets. This non-negotiable premise, apparently directed by the Federal Government and Minister of the day, has resulted in a 'not fit for purpose' rail line which negatively impacts on many communities, necessitates the construction of bridging new rail lines along unsuitable terrain, and has no evidence-based beginning or end.

This cost-cutting baseless foundation for the inland freight line has resulted in the ARTC being compelled to mitigate angry and frustrated communities and stakeholders along the mandated and unpopular route by avoiding, denying and minimising negative impacts; focussing on producing colourful benefit promoting publications full of spin; paying patronising 'lip service' to community concerns and then ignoring these; and enticing community compliance with financial grants for community projects.

The assertion that the current route of the inland freight line is 'not fit for purpose' was further emphasised at a meeting of Wandong-Heathcote Junction community members, ARTC representatives, and Mitchell Shire Council representatives on the 12th October 2022. This meeting was also attended by the Inland Rail Regional Liaison Officer from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, who advised that the Government and ARTC are constructing the inland freight line but there is no guarantee that it will be utilised! This is a concerning revelation given the vast amount of public funds that have been spent and will be spent on a possible 'white elephant' project!

It is suggested that an inland rail freight line should be premised on a purpose-specific beginning and end connecting all agricultural and transport stakeholders along an evidence-based 'line of best fit' in terms of national, state and local freight transport benefits. And this 'fit-for-purpose' route selection process should be premised on valid and reliable research and on consultation with all stakeholders.

1. ARTC governance and management arrangements for the delivery of the Inland Rail Program.

Our small community has not had any engagement with the governance and management arrangements for the delivery of the Inland Rail Program. Over the past three years we have engaged with the Stakeholder Engagement Team for our region, and on two occasions with the Environment Manager and a Performance Manager. The engagement process has consisted of 'pop-up' consultation hubs for several hours at a time at the shopping plaza, one public meeting and meetings with community groups' representatives prior to and after the initial Environment Report, and more recently with Council participation. Within the last two months the ARTC has opened a shop front for four hours on a Thursday due to the community's demand for more consultation.

The focus and content of these 'engagements' has been superficial, resembling an advertising campaign for the national benefits of the program.

Unfortunately, given that there is no benefit for our community from this unwanted and damaging freight line going through our township, the ARTC Stakeholder Engagement Team was continually on the defensive. The interactions were tense and there were no effective management structures or arrangements for our community to access.

It was also frustrating that the ARTC Inland Rail Implementation personnel are split into a construction phase team and an operational team. Given that the Stakeholder Engagement Team only dealt with construction phase issues, information and discussion about operational impacts were confined to 'questions taken on notice' and selectively responded to via e-mail.

It was also counter-productive to learn that the ARTC is only responsible for constructing and maintaining the rail track. Once operational, all emerging traffic impacts need to be addressed with Vic-Roads, and all emerging noise, dust and diesel fumes pollution impacts need to be addressed with freight operators and relevant authorities. These are daunting tasks for volunteers in our small community.

2. The role of Inland Rail in meeting Australia's growing freight task and providing a service offering to meet freight sector needs.

As stated earlier, there are no benefits to our community from the inland freight rail line or double-stacked freight trains of 1.8km, growing to 3.6km in the future, hurtling day and night through our town at 80km per hour at a noise intensity level of a damaging 80 to 90 db. The only possible benefit is that contractors in the 12-18 months bridge replacement construction works, and related road and community amenity destruction and repair works, may purchase their lunch and coffee at our bakery.

For the Shire of Mitchell, and more specifically, for the Beveridge community in the southernmost part of the Shire, there is the benefit of possible employment opportunities if the intermodal terminal is built at Beveridge.

3. The processes for the selection and refinement of the Inland Rail route and whether these processes are fit-for-purpose, including consideration of benefits and impacts.

The ARTC did not engage with our community whatsoever in regards to the inland rail route or its refinement. On the contrary. Initially, it took three hours of two community members haggling with ARTC Stakeholder 'Engagement' officers just to get a site map of the proposed Wandong bridge replacement works.

There were numerous attempts by community members and community group representatives to engage effectively with the ARTC regarding alternative options

to replacing the existing bridge with a new bridge next to it. We proposed a vehicular underpass under the rail line; a replacement bridge further north so as to protect heritage sites and vital community amenities and infrastructure; and a by-pass of the township, possibly utilising the proposed future fast train route. All of these options were not discussed with our community and the only option was replacing the existing bridge with one adjacent to it and this option was deemed non-negotiable.

A major concerning impact is that our primary school of 460 children plus staff is located in Rail Street and less than 500 metres from the bridge destruction and replacement site. The school, together with numerous residential homes in Rail Street, will be exposed to regular noise and dust pollution during the construction phase, and increasing exposure to harmful noise intensity levels of 70db and over, as well as diesel fume pollution, throughout the operation of the track. When confronted with these impacts and with the fact that there is a plethora of empirical evidence that regular exposure to noise intensity levels of 70db is harmful to human hearing, and that regular exposure to 80db causes hearing loss, the response of the ARTC was that impacted people can double-glaze their windows, purchase noise reducing headphones, and move out during high impact times (ARTC Environment Report 2021). There is no response regarding how or where the school is to be relocated, and how local pensioners can afford to double-glaze their windows or relocate. There is no information of how and by whom all these mitigation strategies will be funded.

At our meeting with the ARTC in October, the Performance Manager stated that the ARTC is aware of the vast empirical research demonstrating the harmful impacts of regular exposure to noise intensity levels of 70db and over, however, has been directed to model noise impact on the outdated NSW Noise Impact Assessment Guidelines. It is therefore not surprising that people in the community are contemplating, or have commenced, legal class and individual action regarding compensation for health damaging noise and diesel fume pollution.

Another major issue not addressed in the route selection process is that, out of the 460 children at our primary school, at least 40% come from outside the township with the majority of these coming from Wallan by private car. The typical route involves crossing three level crossings, namely, at Heathcote

Junction, Lightwood and Wallan. Wandong-Heathcote Junction residents also utilise this route to access the secondary school, medical and health services, Council services, the library, shopping facilities and sport/recreation facilities in Wallan. The increasing frequency and length of the freight trains will result in travel delays and vehicular bank-up either side of each crossing. This is particularly concerning for emergency vehicles where time is of fundamental importance.

The alternative route to Wallan via the Hume Hwy involves making a right-hand turn at the Wandong off-ramp intersection against continuous two-way traffic accessing the Hume Hwy to the north, the Northern Highway to the west, and Epping and Plenty Road to the east – a challenging task for parents and carers trying to get children to school on time! The Wallan off-ramp also involves a right hand turn against continual two-way traffic accessing Wallan and the Northern Highway to the west, and Epping and Plenty Road to the east.

The route across Heathcote-Junction and Lightwood level crossings is also utilised by our residents to access higher order metropolitan services, namely, the Northern Hospital, Specialist Medical Services, and major commercial and retail outlets at Epping. In instances of Freeway closure due to accidents, spills and roadworks, the police divert traffic through Wandong and two of the level crossings to Wallan.

The ARTC's response to these impacts and situations is that there may not be a substantial increase in trains if the route is underutilised, and that the 3.6km trains will require a new track. Also, traffic issues are the responsibility of Vic-Roads and are not the concern of the ARTC.

4. The effectiveness of ARTC's community and stakeholder engagement processes, and opportunities for improvement, including the ARTC's approach to addressing community concerns.

As repeatedly demonstrated throughout this submission, the ARTC's community and stakeholder processes with the community of Wandong-Heathcote Junction have been premised on the mandated requirement to defend the passage of an inappropriate and damaging national freight rail line through the middle of our

town next to our school, people's homes, our shops, our bushfire memorial park, and through our community constructed Pickett Walk Reserve, potential and listed heritage sites, community funded and planted 20 year-old trees, and road infrastructure. Hence, there has been no honest or meaningful engagement but, rather, an adversarial process of withholding information, minimising the community's concerns, and utilising a 'consultative' process of marketing the national transport benefits and 16,000 potential nation-wide jobs of the inland rail. The ARTC has purposefully avoided disclosing any harmful impacts, simply stating that there will be some noise and dust during construction and that everything will return to "normal" after 12 to 18 months of construction.

Included with this submission for the Panel's information is a combined Wandong-Heathcote Junction Groups' Response to the ARTC's Environment Report and its Social Impact Addendum, submitted in late 2021. Subsequent to this report, Mitchell Shire Council representatives have attended our meetings with the ARTC and have facilitated the last two meetings. Prior to our report, which embarrassed the Council, the meetings between the ARTC and Council were held 'in confidence'! There is currently some concern expressed in Council about the health and well-being impacts of the Inland Freight Rail especially given that another township in the Shire, namely Broadford, will experience similar impacts given that the rail line runs along the back fence of a child care centre and the back fences of numerous homes.

At our last meeting with the ARTC and Council on the 12th October, the departmental Liaison Officer advised that the new Minister is conducting an independent review of the planning and delivery of the Inland Rail and that there is only one online pathway to access this review. We requested the provision of the pathway to making a submission and she agreed to e-mail us with the details. We have received nothing to date – presumably to prevent or delay us in lodging a submission.

Conclusion

Whilst this submission has necessarily been confined to the impacts of the Inland Rail on our township of Wandong-Heathcote Junction, and on the adversarial and unethical strategies employed by the ARTC in dealing with our community, there

is no doubt that other townships and communities have been treated in a similar manner simply because the Minister and Government of the day insisted that the Inland Rail must utilise existing rail track assets for the route. This has resulted in a highly costly project which does not have a solid evidence-based foundation and lacks credibility across a number of communities and municipalities in Victoria, NSW and Qld.

It is sincerely hoped that this important Inland Rail Review will inform the current Minister and Government of the issues which must be addressed and rectified so that the Inland Rail Program is indeed fit-for-purpose and attains the credibility it deserves.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important review.

Alicia Poperechny, Member Wandong Heathcote Junction Community Group.

[Redacted]

Karen Christensen OAM, President Wandong History Group

[Redacted]

[Redacted]